



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Cameroonian couple convicted for human trafficking

Young Cameroonian girl was forced to perform as domestic

DETROIT — A couple from Cameroon was convicted of involuntary servitude and related charges here yesterday, announced U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy, Assistant Attorney General Wan J. Kim and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent-in-Charge Brian M. Moskowitz.

The Honorable Arthur J. Tarnow, United States District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, found Joseph Djoumessi guilty of conspiracy, involuntary servitude, and harboring for financial gain. A jury convicted Evelyn Djoumessi of conspiracy and involuntary servitude.

The ICE office in Detroit began its investigation in 2000 after receiving information from the Farmington Hills Police Department regarding a young girl possibly being held against her will. A young girl from Cameroon was discovered in the Djoumessi home, living under a false identity and in questionable circumstances.

The investigation revealed that the girl was brought into the United States illegally. During the time the girl lived at the couple's home, she was forced – by beating and threats – to care for their children and perform household chores without pay. They also limited her contact with the outside world and did not permit her to attend school.

“It is a basic and fundamental human right to be free, and no child should ever be forced to live in a world of fear and involuntary servitude,” said Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent-in-Charge Brian M. Moskowitz. “Today’s indictment is a testament to our solemn commitment to protect those who cannot protect themselves. While we cannot restore someone’s childhood, we can bring their abusers to justice.”

“Imprisoning, beating, and compelling the involuntary servitude of an innocent teenager is among the most heinous of crimes. This conviction underscores the seriousness with which this Office views all crimes of human trafficking,” said Stephen J. Murphy, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

“Involuntary servitude is modern-day slavery,” said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “As long as these types of offenses continue to exist in our society, the Justice Department will vigorously prosecute those who engage in the trafficking of human beings.”

The Djoumessis face a maximum sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment, three years’ supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. They can also be ordered to make restitution to the victim. Sentencing has been scheduled for June 8, 2006.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Gary Felder, Eastern District of Michigan, and Jacqueline Spratt of the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, jointly prosecuted this case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.